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ASLEF

SEPTEMBER 2007

Journal

SOLIDARITY

ASLEF and UNITE
sign accord

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the ASLEF Journal

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VERBAL AGREEMENT - NOT WORTH THE PAPER IT'S WRITTEN ON!



THE recent signing of the memorandum of understanding between ASLEF and UNITE (see page 4) seems to have triggered something of a Mad Hatter's Tea Party amongst our sister railway trade unions!

In a word, the memorandum is about solidarity - but this is a concept that needs to be defined in an organised way. It grieves me that the word is paraded so often that it's in danger of losing its colour and its meaning. The minute books of conferences, the speeches of orators and the diaries of politicians are littered with wind-bag expressions of 'solidarity' - which often mean nothing more than an attempt to get a round of applause.

We felt it was necessary to spell out what it will mean in practical terms concerning our relations with Unite.

So - we wrote it down.

From the reaction of one of our sister unions, you'd have thought it was a capital offence to be in possession of a pen! For reasons I find difficult to fathom, some March Hares in the RMT interpreted our agreement as an attempt by Unite to recruit its members!

Firstly, it isn't. And secondly, there is nothing preventing the RMT formalising its relations with Unite in the same way we have.

Our memorandum binds us not to seek to recruit each other's members; defines how we would identify spheres of influence should this help improve union bargaining or industrial organisation; agrees to protect local bargaining units and, where there is no clear or agreed sphere of influence, ensure in partnership that we establish the most effective organisation. As it says, this is 'a framework for resolving questions of membership, representation and recognition'.

The Dodos might ask why we want a relationship with Unite at all. What about because Unite is the largest union in the UK, it respects our position as an independent craft union - and we both represent members in the rail industry, are members of the TUC and affiliates to the Labour Party? The fact is that we've got a relationship whether we like it or not - so we might as well define it.

Those who would grin like Cheshire Cats at the demise of our union are trying to cause trouble by pretending this is a step on the road to merge with Unite. It's nonsense - but for the benefit of the cynics we even included a paragraph reminding everyone that ASLEF members will decide the future of this union - and no one else.

PETITION DOWNING STREET ON LONGER LORRIES

KEITH NORMAN is asking members to sign an on-line petition on the Downing Street website calling on the government not to allow longer and heavier lorries onto our roads. The initiative was begun by Alan Edwards, an ASLEF member at Ipswich (Freightliner).

The link for the petition is

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Ban60tonlorries/>

'I'm grateful to Alan for setting up the petition,' Keith says, 'and I hope a good number of drivers will support the idea.'

Alan points out on the No 10 site that, 'These lorries are up to 30 metres long, and weigh between 60 to 84 tonnes, the 60 tonner is 50% longer and over a third heavier than existing 44 tonne lorries, that already use our roads. They are totally unsuited to our roads on economic, environmental and especially safety grounds. We have enough lorries on our already congested roads, so use the alternative, put the traffic on the railways.'

The union is lobbying on the issue, but signing the petition is another useful way of getting our views across. It has been used successfully in the past – notably on the issue of road pricing.

PENSION RULES FOR THE RICH

UP TO 112 directors of FTSE 100 companies are set to receive a pension worth at least £200,000 a year – and 26 can look forward to a pension of at least £500,000 a year, according to Labour Research magazine's annual survey of executives' pension arrangements.

Almost 80 companies in the FTSE 100 still have final salary schemes for some or all of their directors. Typically these schemes have a generous accrual rate of 1/30th of salary per year and so will pay a pension of two-thirds salary after 20 years' service.

Lord Browne who resigned as chief executive of BP, tops the premier pension league. Browne, who resigned in May after lying in court over his private life can look to a happy retirement as he picks up a pension of over £20,000 a week.

LEARNING AWARD GOES NUTTY



IN MAY we nominated Chris Nutty for the George Guy Lifelong Learning Award. He has had a letter to say that he has won and has also received a cheque for £300 to spend on courses or educational resources for his workplace.

The bad news is he has also had a letter to say he has not won the National TUC ULR award. We can't win them all!

MINISTER SHUNTS INTO DINER!



RUTH KELLY had only been transport minister for a week when she had to stand up in Parliament and pose as the authoritative voice of UK rail. It is a peculiar Parliamentary system – and inevitably the wheels soon fell off.

Ms Kelly said that funding would be made available to improve rail services between Wolverhampton and Dartmouth. This was a surprise because the rail line to Dartmouth is not in need of improvement. It is in need of bringing back from the dead, as it was chopped by Beeching in the 1960s. The station at Dartmouth is full, not of passengers, but diners! It has been converted into a restaurant and hotel – which in regatta week charges £950 for a room overlooking the harbour.

Diners will still have to fork out for a taxi for some time to come!



General Secretaries Keith Norman and Derek Simpson 'sign up for solidarity' watched by (from left to right) John Kelly, Chairman of UNITE's Railways, Buses and Ferries Sector, Tosh McDonald, ASLEF's Vice-President, Bob Rixham, UNITE National Officer and Alan Donnelly, ASLEF's President.

ASLEF and UNITE sign accord to work together

ASLEF and UNITE last month signed a memorandum of understanding about their intentions to work together for agreed objectives within the rail industry.

ASLEF's General Secretary, Keith Norman said he was confident for the future of an arrangement in which UNITE's resources and influence nationally would work alongside ASLEF's considerable influence within the railway industry.

Unite's Joint General Secretary, Derek Simpson said, 'We hope that by coming to this accord we can promote the interests of both sets of our members as well as working for an integrated, publicly accountable passenger and freight network.'

Both unions dismissed suggestions that this was a precursor to a merger. Keith said, 'Neither of us feels any pressure for merger; we are not in positions of competition or conflict as regards membership; but we do see areas where we can cooperate for the good of our members. That is the point of the exercise.'

'This union is strong, independent and now financially stable. But that doesn't stop us wanting to cultivate powerful and useful friends like Unite.'

WIGAN PROTESTS REFUTED

GREENPEACE protesters last month called for nuclear waste trains which pass through Wigan 4 days a week to be halted because of the 'heightened terrorist threat'.

The trains which carry spent nuclear fuel from nuclear reactors at Hinkley go through the borough on their way to the Thorp reprocessing plant at BNFL, Sellafield in Cumbria.

But Counsellor John Hilton, a former mayor of the city, who used to operate the service before retiring from the footplate, said, 'I was ASLEF's health and safety representative - and there is no way we would have agreed to work this service if it represented a threat to our member's health.'

'I don't believe that the people of Wigan have anything at all to worry about.'

International Brigade – 70 years on

STEVE GRANT, the union's district 8 (London) organiser, represented ASLEF at a ceremony at Jubilee Gardens in London on 21 July to mark the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War.

Steve says, 'I was honoured to represent the union at the event, and I was delighted to see ASLEF members from Waterloo & Nine Elms at the ceremony with their branch banner.'

He explains, 'The ceremony was to honour the 2,300 men and women who left these shores 70 years ago to fight side by side with the Spanish people in their heroic struggle against fascism from 1936 to 1939. It was also to remember the 526 who did not return.'

'Under Franco's orders terrible atrocities were committed against ordinary civilians - not least the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica. This incident and others like it stirred the conscience of many and spurred thousands of men and women from scores of countries - including Ireland, Germany and Italy - to go to Spain to assist the elected Republican government.'

Speakers at the ceremony included Jack



The banner of the British volunteers



The memorial at Jubilee Gardens



'Marz Colombini from the Waterloo branch with Barking's Bard Billy Bragg



ASLEF and IBMT banners at the ceremony

Jones, who is the Life President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, and Roman Marquez, a special guest from Spain. Other delegates attended from Germany and banners were displayed from 'Cable Street' and the TGWU. A diplomat from the Spanish embassy along with surviving members of the Brigades laid wreaths at the memorial.

Tributes were paid to the comrades who had passed away recently and to the many who made a great contribution to the cause of defending democracy and social justice.

The 'Bard of Barking', Billy Bragg, closed the event with renditions of 'Jarama' (which was adopted as the British Brigades song) and the 'Internationale'.

If any members would like more details of the trust's work or to join (£15 standard,

£7.50 concession) please contact the International Brigade Memorial Trust at 37 Reginald Road, London E7 9HS or www.international-brigades.org.uk or send a cheque payable to 'IBMT'.

Steve Grant



NORTHERN RAIL The union has agreed a joint statement with Northern about harmonisation and rest day working which reads as follows:

'As part of this year's pay negotiations, it was agreed that Northern would, within 3 months, table detailed proposals regarding the harmonisation of employment terms and conditions for the various grade groups in scope of the Company's Collective Bargaining Agreements. By 1 June 2007, Northern put forward detailed Harmonisation proposals for all the grade groups and they are now the subject of joint discussion between the Company and representative Trade Unions.

We'd like to take this

opportunity to clear up the confusion over the issue of Harmonisation and the 2007 Pay Agreement.

The Agreement, reached, as part of this year's pay negotiations, was that Northern would submit detailed proposals to the trade unions within 3 months, which was achieved. The pay settlement that we agreed was never conditional upon achieving agreement on Harmonisation. We'd like to confirm that both Northern and ASLEF are in agreement that the 2007 pay settlement is unaffected by our ongoing discussions.

Following recent talks, ASLEF and Northern have agreed a temporary extension to the current NOD/Rest Day Working Agreements until the end of ASLEF's August 2007 EC session.

The ASLEF Executive Committee will discuss the future of the current NOD/Rest Day Working Agreements at their next meeting in August and

we will let you know the outcome and next steps shortly afterwards.

We think the current Agreement is of benefit to both Northern and our employees and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our drivers for their assistance and support in making the Agreements work.'

NORTHERN RAIL COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS The following members have been elected as the Employee Council representatives on Northern Rail and will stand as the ASLEF candidates in any election that may be required:

A Hourigan of Manchester
Victoria: J Evans of Manchester
Piccadilly: D Bates of Blackpool:
G Cox of Doncaster: P Cawood of Leeds

Three further internal elections are currently taking place.

TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS - 2007 TERMS & CONDITIONS Improvements to terms & conditions on

Transpennine Express have been agreed including Paternity Leave and Maternity Leave entitlement; improvements in leisure travel facilities for employees who reach the normal retirement age and those who are granted pensionable ill-health retirement until the end of the franchise.

DRS – REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on DRS until 31st December 2007 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

CHILTERN RAILWAYS – REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Chiltern Railways until 25th August 2007 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT – REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working until 29th September 2007 subject to continued monitoring by our representatives.

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Day of action to free Iranian transport union leader



A VIGIL was held on 9 August at the Iranian Embassy in London's South Kensington to protest at the imprisonment of transport union leader Mansour Osanloo (left).

Osanloo is being held without charge in Tehran's notorious Evin prison after being assaulted and kidnapped by unidentified gunmen. The imprisonment is the latest event in a two year government campaign against Osanloo and his Tehran bus drivers' union. Meetings have been broken up and supporters jailed and beaten.

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) called the action day to put pressure on the Iranian Government to treat

Osanloo and his union 'in the way that decency, Iranian and international law demands'

Osanloo, 47, was assaulted and snatched from a bus on 10 July - just weeks after returning from a visit to the ITF in London and meetings with union leaders in Brussels. Only after protests did the government admit that he had been taken to Evin prison where he has been denied legal and medical visits.

ITF General Secretary David Cockroft says, 'It is appalling that he should be held without charge simply for insisting on his human right to join a trade union.'

● More details are available in the news section of aslef.org.uk

Edinburgh Light Rail to go ahead

A £660 million Light Rail system for Edinburgh is to go ahead despite attempts by the Scottish Nationalist to block the development.

ASLEF's Scottish organiser Kevin Lindsay, who has campaigned for the system over a number of years, says he is delighted at the news.

'This will mean real improvements to the quality of life of people living in the city, with a cleaner environment and less congested roads.'

The development has been given the go-ahead after Labour, the Liberal



Democrats, Conservatives, Greens and solo independent MSP's voted 81-47 against the Scottish National Party to support the tramway.

Reports suggest that 77% of students at Telford College would use the Edinburgh tram, with more than half

(53%) leaving their car at home to do so. Some 81% of staff at the Scottish Gas headquarters at Granton have said that they would use the tram - 63% of whom currently drive to work.

ASLEF will be seeking recognition for the drivers.



Ernst & Young: Profits both ways

Metronet collapse is not a problem for privateers!

WHILE Metronet's collapse will cause some financial pain to the shareholder companies, most of the guilty parties will walk away from the London Underground crash with no worries according to a report in 'Private Eye' magazine.

Pricewaterhouse can keep the £29m it got for advising that the PPP (public private partnership) was financially sound. Lobbyist Lexington can keep all the fees it earned lobbying for Metronet.

But luckiest of all is Ernst & Young, which has pulled off the smart trick of profiting from both Metronet's appointment and its collapse. Though pushed through by the Treasury, the ill-fated PPP contract still had to get the all-clear from the then Transport Secretary Stephen Byers. For that it needed a 'value for money' endorsement - just the job for a helpful consultancy firm. E&Y delivered its approval - and a bill for £884,000.

Ernst & Young has now been appointed as administrator of Metronet, so it can earn millions more clearing up the mess it helped to make!

Corporate Manslaughter – progress at last

ASLEF has welcomed the fact that at last we have a Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill – but general secretary Keith Norman says it has missed an opportunity to put something more meaningful onto the statue book. He insists that although the new law will do something about the thousands of people killed each year at work it falls short of finding individuals guilty.

This new law will make it easier to convict culpable organisations, but vitally it has not lowered the threshold of guilt - it criminalises only an organisation whose gross negligence results in death.

ASLEF's reservations are that no directors or other individuals will be prosecuted under the new law; that there will be no sentences of impris-

onment; and that many organisations which are unincorporated will not be covered by the provisions of the Act. Keith says this is evidence of double standards. 'If train drivers cause an accident they can go

to prison - yet the bosses who provide them with equipment which may be faulty and cause an accident will get off scot-free.'

● A fuller report will appear in the next issue of the Journal

DISTRICT 7 UPDATE Regional Organiser Stan Moran reports that he attended the Wales Labour Party conference last month, where transport, and especially rail, was high on the agenda. At the Wales TUC Stan was elected to the General Council, having spoken at the conference about integrated transport and globalisation and seen both our motions adopted. Stan was surprised that our sister union the RMT voted against a call to make St David's Day a Bank Holiday in Wales.

Stan says, 'We are in serious negotiations with First Great Western on harmonisation of terms and conditions within the company. We are still a long way apart, but hopefully things will change. The company council have been first class in their efforts.'

Stan has also been in pay talks with Chiltern railways and a deal has been negotiated and put out to referendum. For the first time in 5 years the union is negotiating pay with Arriva Trains - trying to clear up 'some old sores'. He predicts some 'very interesting times ahead' in the West Country with the announcement that Arriva has won the cross country franchise - and also Deutsche Bahn buying EWS.

TOLPUDDLE 2007

2007 again saw District 8 sending a delegation down to the Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival in Dorset on 15 July. We were joined on the trip by Mick 'May Day' Butler. It was good that he remembered which day we were travelling on - especially after he missed the train to Paris earlier in the year with the excuse, 'I forgot when May Day was!'

This year's event wasn't well attended by most activists, something to do with the weather I think. But despite the downpour, our spirits weren't dampened. Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary, and Tony Benn were a couple of the speakers who addressed the crowds that had turned up.

This year we were fortunate to bump into some old friends again. Also in attendance were members of Brighton branch, along with Simon Weller, the EC member for District 1.

I would like to thank our District Organiser Steve Grant for his help in organising this trip and the following branches for their support: Arnos Grove, East Finchley / Golders Green, Neasden, West Brompton and Wembley Park.

We also bid a fond farewell to Ellen Dean, one of our regular travellers, who has just taken up residency at Watford Hospital as a fully qualified Doctor.

Alistair Reay Secretary - District Council 8

WHO WERE THE MARTYRS?

Tolpuddle is a village in Dorset where in 1833/34 a great wave of trade union activity took place and a lodge of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers was established. Entry into the union was a shilling.

In March 1834 six farm labourers were sentenced to 7 years in a penal colony in Australia for being Trade Union activists, the seven were George & James Loveless, James Brine, James Hammett, Thomas Stansfield and his son John Stansfield. They were arrested for administering unlawful oaths, but for many the real reason was to protest at their poverty wages.

The government at the time, along with the landowners, had become alarmed that the working class were speaking out against the conditions and forming unions. They were determined to quell the uprising, and had the men arrested. After the trial they were quickly deported to Australia. After a petition was signed by 250,000 people and a march of over 30,000 on Whitehall in support of the six, the sentences were remitted; eventually the six were given free passage home from Australia.



ASLEF banners in Tolpuddle: Finn Brennan (East Finchley), Simon Weller (EC), Mark Thompson (Brighton), Ellen Dean (daughter of Graham Dean) and Nick Butler.



'Underground but never ground under' – not even at Tolpuddle (aptly named for this year's weather)!



Rural rain didn't dampen ASLEF spirits!

ASLEF PROUD IN BRIGHTON



ASLEF members find their place in the sun

In the pink! ASLEF's equal opportunity campaigners get the message across at the union's Brighton stall



Brighton Pride 2007 was another outstanding success story for ASLEF who outshone their next door neighbours (the RMT) and cemented relations with their neighbours on the other side (Amicus-UNITE). It was a blistering hot day for those marching, LGBTCC members Zoi Kakouris, Steve Swain, Susan Greenwell, Neil Adams and Ben Wallington were joined by EC members Simon Weller and Terry Wilkinson. Back at the stall ASLEF staff member Alex Leigh and Equalities Adviser, Sharon Allen ably held the fort and blew up the specially printed balloons until the marchers reached the stall. Fortunately, the EC members were persuaded to provide lots of liquid refreshment to cool everyone off.

SHARON ALLEN



THE four day week is a bit like the trick that card-sharps pull off at the side of the road – the one where they put a coin under one of three cups and then ask gullible punters to point out which cup is covering it : sometimes the coin's there, and sometimes it's not. Usually it's not.

The four day week is a similar 'smoke and mirrors' ruse. Have we got a four-day week? Yes. Do we work a four-day week? No.

There is no excuse for any confusion on this issue: the concept is simplicity itself. A four-day week is easily defined. It means that our members have 156 rest days a year. That is what we need to insist upon – for two reasons.

Firstly, ASLEF has negotiated the 4-day week - and it is always the union's job to defend what we have achieved. And secondly, if we adhered strictly to the 4-day week and thus abolished all institutionalised overtime – we would create vacancies in almost every TOC and FOC in the country.

More than this, we would also provide alternative work for our members. This is especially true in the freight sector where companies seem to spend vastly more time fighting each other for existing contracts rather than trying to win new freight onto rail.

RUMOURS OF REDUNDANCIES

Let me give you the example of Tyne Yard. I went to a branch meeting in Newcastle with district organiser Nicky Whitehead last month. Almost half the branch members were at the meeting largely because EWS had just announced their 'Depot Strategy' – which raised the possibility of depot closures and live redundancies. It's been suggested to the union that 14 drivers could go at Tyne Yard.

In this particular instance the district organiser and I were able to reassure members. These are management figures, which are often to 'soften up' members or just to put the union off-balance. Also at the time of the branch meetings there had been no meetings between the management and the

negotiating team.

We don't believe there is an immediate threat to the Tyne Yard depot. But if the threatened redundancies became a reality in a depot with a very young age profile, it would involve our members needing to look at moves of at least 100 miles to remain employed within EWS.

And it doesn't just involve this depot. The neighbouring depot of Thornaby has also been given a figure of 7 redundancies, this coming so soon after a number of senior drivers have taken voluntary redundancy following the loss of work (Boulby potash) to Freightliner Heavy Haul. In District 4 we also have Healey Mills under threat of redundancies.

HOW DO WE PREVENT THE THREATS?

The only way to ensure that all our members have secure employment is to stick rigidly to the 4-day week – and call a halt to institutionalised overtime. We know that in Virgin in District 4 Sundays are not included within the duties: effectively, Sunday is outside the working week and is covered by overtime working. This might be seen as a temporary bonus for some drivers, but it is a disaster for the vast majority as it invites redundancy threats. We also find that GNER has rest day working enshrined in the conditions of service; Freightliner Heavy Haul and GBRF appear to have uncontrolled rest day working – and FLHH doesn't even have a RDW sanction from ASLEF.

The conclusion for the union is clear: we must insist on the proper application of the 4-day week. If it became a fact rather than a myth, we would instantly create vacancies in just about every TOC and FOC. We would protect our members and create secure employment for all our drivers.

This is ASLEF's policy and we must strive for it even if it means confronting difficult issues in our own areas. It must become a major objective of our union to abolish all institutionalised overtime and create a true 4 day week – which means 156 rest days per year.

French transport workers' 'right to strike' under attack

IN MOVES that echo Thatcher's attacks on ASLEF in her early years in office, France's new right-wing government and president have lost no time in showing their feelings about the country's transport unions.

Within weeks of taking power they have announced plans to force workers to maintain a 'minimum service' during public transport strikes – meaning that even if they are on strike, they have to keep trains running!

François Fillon, the Prime Minister appointed by President Nicolas Sarkozy, has already said that if the law works it should be amended to include 'other public services, notably education'.

THE PLANS

The 'minimum service' proposals are pointed directly at transport - 'any company or government organisation entrusted with a mission of public service for the regular transport of passengers who are not tourists'. At the moment air transport workers are not included – rail is the clear first target.

The government will



French rail unions have declared that the right to strike is not negotiable

instruct each individual company to create its own plans for 'minimum service' requirements. One idea being touted is that all workers would be obliged to work at least 6 hours per day – when they are on strike! This outrageous attack on workers' rights could actually enable employers to make a profit from industrial action because management would have the right to 'schedule' action for off-peak times! If a business is actually making money from action by workers, it has no incentive to come to end a dispute!

NOTIFICATION OF ACTION

Under existing French law, a union considering industrial action in any public service has to inform its management of its intentions 5 days in advance, and the dispute needs to be about 'professional concerns'. In the private sector unions are obliged to inform management officially of their demands prior to any strike action taking place. They do not, however, have to tell management of the strike action in advance.

The Sarkozy-Fillon proposals make new restrictions on workers considering action. Each

individual considering going on strike will be obliged to declare to management his or her intentions 2 days beforehand – or face disciplinary action.

Unions must also notify the company in advance of any plan to issue a notification of strike action – and this is not allowed until the 'failure of negotiations'. This seems reasonable – but this 'failure' will be defined by law, and negotiations will need to be conducted within a 'framework' to be agreed between employers, unions and government within the next 5 months.

The proposals would also make it illegal for a union to pay workers for strike days. In a further attack on union democracy, employers will be entitled to call meetings to vote on whether strike action will continue. In fact, French unions currently vote every day on whether to continue the action. The proposal is aimed at giving the employer a role in union affairs.

COOL RESPONSE FROM MANAGEMENT

Even the chairman of the national rail company, the SNCF (Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français) seemed rather surprised at

the severity of the government's plans. She described the proposals as 'a culture shock' as she pointed out that strikes had become less frequent. Indeed, work days lost per worker has dropped from 0.7 last year to 0.13 for the first six months of 2007.

However the company appears to be offering some 'sweeteners' to encourage workers to accept the 'minimum service' proposals. It recently announced 100 million euros of additional investment and has suggested that 1,000 extra workers could be employed. However, it is unclear whether these are new jobs or simply replacements for staff who have left. Sarkozy has already said he does not intend to replace half of the 450,000 civil servants who will retire over the next five years.

WARM RESPONSE FROM UNIONS

The 8 French rail unions - CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, SUD-Rail, UNSA, CFE/CGC and FGAAC - have declared that 'the right to strike is not negotiable' and are making arrangements for demonstrations when the law is voted upon, and mass protests are planned both at the National Assembly in Paris and in other cities across the country.

Jean Yves Petit of the CGT, ASLEF's sister union in France, says the strength of feeling at this attack on 'civil, human and trade union freedoms' will be opposed by the unions 'at every turn'.

On behalf of ASLEF, Keith Norman has said our members will stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with our French colleagues to defend essential rights. 'If the French government gets away with this attack on trade unions, you can be sure the right-wing in the UK will rush to copy their example,' he said. 'This is not only principled solidarity support – it is also practical self-defence.'

A report from General Secretary Keith Norman



The French Prime Minister, François Fillon, has plans to restrict workers' rights

STEVE PUTS THE WRIGHT VIEW ON FATALITIES TO CHANNEL 5



BEING involved in an accident where someone has died on the railway is rarely looked at from the point of view of the driver. So when the Channel 5 programme 'The Wright Stuff' contacted ASLEF's head office we jumped at the chance to have one of our members explain the effects a suicide has on the driver.

Steve Williams from Swansea High Street branch seemed the perfect candidate to get the message across to the public. He has had a total of 4 people jump in front of him whilst driving in the last 25 years - the most recent being two-and-a-half years ago – a figure which is not uncommon in the train driving community.

Steve explained to programme host Matthew Wright the effects of having someone commit suicide in front of his train. His post traumatic stress, an inability to come to terms with the fact that he was driving the train that killed someone and how it affected not only him but also his family.

When asked about what help was offered after an incident like this, he explained that his company, First Great Western, offered counselling but he added that the greatest help came from his colleagues, the support network in the union from other drivers who have had similar experiences. It was pointed out several times on the programme from all the guests that no-one can really understand what you have gone through unless you have experienced it yourself, so union members can provide an



invaluable service to fellow members in this time of crisis.

This almost taboo subject is one of many that needs to be brought into the public eye much more, if only to encourage more organisations to

create support networks for people that suffer from these types of accidents.

Well done Steve – and it was nice to see you wearing your ASLEF tie on the programme!

Sarah Francis



MALCOLM THORPE, who is acting as branch secretary at Bescot, has sent this photo of a tapestry that was made by Catherine Helvin of St Helens. She made it for the staff at the depot when she heard about Joe Paxon being injured in a vandalism incident at Kidderminster last December.

Catherine has made other tapestries for traincrew messrooms, including Euston and New Street.

KEEPING TRACK WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

This look at events in ASLEF 100 and 50 years ago reveals the excitement caused in 1907 by the arrival of a recruiter from another union seeking to poach ASLEF members – and the report from 50 years ago reveals the major issues discussed at the union's conference

100 YEARS AGO

The report from T. Thatcher of the Stourbridge Branch included this account of a lively meeting in the West Midlands ...

"On Sunday, June 23rd, Stourbridge was paid a visit by Mr Thomas, organizing secretary of the A.S.R.S., and all railwaymen were invited to the meeting, more specially the members of our branch. We were told what a great man Mr. Thomas was, and that he would do great things when he arrived; in fact, he had only to set foot on Stourbridge soil and the members of our branch would be converted into A.S.R.S. members. They prophesied that they would have at least 25 of our members. Hearing all this, we decided to go to the meeting to be converted. Being about 40 strong he had the opportunity of obtaining above 25 of our members, if it lay in his power to convert them. In his opening remarks he stated that he did not wish to enter into personalities, but he had not proceeded far before he began to criticize our General Secretary, and also the Society.....Seeing that I was getting the upper hand of him he began to lose his hair and got most sarcastic...as a result, instead of obtaining 25 of our members, we made an increase of nine at our next meeting

the following Sunday. I cannot conclude without thanking Mr. Thomas for coming to Stourbridge to organize our forces, and I can assure him that if he is going to convert any of our members or those outside he will have to preach the gospel of trade unionism and not indulge in criticism."

50 YEARS AGO

The AAD Chairman - 'Lennard of St. Leonards' – provided this conference report to the September 1957 edition of the Locomotive Journal ...

"...This year's A.A.D. will go down as one in which it was to be noted that the future fighting strength is certainly not missing from our ranks. The delegates, many of them young and new to Conference, expressed in debate without any loss of temper or personalities the real feeling of the rank-and-file.

'As members of our Organisation we should feel proud that with all the changing-over of the B.T.C. from steam to diesel and electrification in the near future, a careful watch is being maintained to ensure that "the front end" is to be for the men of our craft only.

'It was very pleasing to see the confidence the delegates gave to our General Secretary and to the Executive Committee to continue in the best interests of us all on such questions as wages, conditions and hours.....Our Society's position on the H-bomb Tests and Colour Bar soon had delegates on their feet. It was pleasing to hear the fine contribution of the General Secretary on the Colour Bar problem, and all delegates were pleased with the result on those two items – No Test, No Bar!"

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

WHITE PAPER FOR RAIL -

THE GOOD, THE BAD

Last month the government issued a White Paper called 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway'. The White Paper is the start of a consultation process. Depending on the feedback on the White Paper, ministers may make changes before the final version is published. 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' details what the Department for Transport (DfT) is committed to and what it claims it is 'the most positive statement about the growth and development of Britain's Railways in 30 years'. 'It is easy to be critical – and it is the duty of a union to be so,' declares Keith Norman. 'We always welcome criticism for! 'But it would be churlish not to welcome some of the statements and visions contained in this White Paper. There is no doubt that it would be a great boost for our industry.

'But it could have gone further – and in this feature we look at what is in the White Paper – and point out what we think it should have included.'

THE GOOD..

1. It was encouraging to hear Ruth Kelly say, 'Those who work on our railways deserve credit.' This is a useful ministerial statement for ASLEF pay negotiators this year!
2. There was some encouragement for freight. The £200m that the White Paper commits to freight must be seen as a positive initiative. £18.5m was recently put into the Gospel Oak to Barking Line and 4 other proposals for rail freight expansion are being considered for funding from the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF).
3. The minister gave a commitment not to close any rural networks – although perhaps it's time to start thinking about opening some more.

THE BAD ..

1. The union was rather concerned that Ruth Kelly seems to be looking at rail with remarkable optimism. ASLEF is pleased at our successes, but also aware of rail's failings. It was therefore slightly disconcerting to see her speak of the 'remarkable success of our railway network' and to describe it as 'a modern success story'. It can be, and we want it to be – but the last thing we need is complacency at government level. No one can be content when last year we saw commuters go on 'fare' strike, one in ten trains arriving late, toilets being ripped out of carriages to provide extra standing room and fares hiked by up to 20 %!
2. While we welcome the positives in the 30-year strategy, we have to be aware that some future government of a different political hue could simply rip it up.
3. The government has shied away from definite commitments to big infrastructure projects and offered only lukewarm support for the London Crossrail project. The minister went no further than saying, 'The Crossrail Bill is being debated in Parliament and we are considering whether Government funding can be matched with private sector funding.' Any decision is therefore effectively put off for the next year.
4. A high-speed north-south rail line was ruled out on the grounds of 'unclear benefits' and 'considerable costs'. The government also believes that the environmental benefits of high-speed trains are 'over-stated'. ASLEF doesn't agree and we will be seeking evidence to challenge this.
5. A new freight line has been ruled out.
6. While the White Paper did not say no to electrification, the government believes that there are 'other priorities' at present.

THE UGLY

1. John McDonnell MP raised ASLEF's proposal to retain at least one Train Operating Company in public hands to set standards and provide comparisons. He pointed out that the Labour party in Scotland had made proposals for operating train passenger services on a not-for-profit basis and asked if the government would consider such a measure.

The transport minister replied, 'When the railway is entering an unprecedented era of growth, it would not be right for the Government to suggest that the answer to any concerns about railways is to restructure them. Network Rail has never advanced a proposition for running not-for-profit railway services, but if at any time it did so, the Government would consider the proposal.'

Writing to thank John for raising the issue, Keith Norman pointed out, 'It is very strange that in her reply to you, the minister undertook to consider running a not-for-profit franchise if Network Rail suggested it – but apparently she won't consider it if the proposal is made by a Member of Parliament, a Labour-affiliated trade union or the Labour Party of Scotland!'

WHAT THE WHITE PAPER SAYS MAIN FEATURES

KEY MESSAGES

- Over 1,300 new jobs created by 2012
- £10bn will be invested in new infrastructure over the next 10 years
- 22.5% growth in passenger numbers by 2012
- £5.5bn to be spent on new infrastructure over the next 10 years
- £600m new money for the New Street and Fenchurch Street stations in Birmingham
- A third of a billion passengers on the next generation of trains
- £150m for the new high-speed rail line
- Simplified fares for commuters and business travellers
- Modernised ticketing system
- £200m for a new freight line
- Provision of a new bus service backing Commuter Rail
- Any rural lines.

SAFETY AND RELIABILITY

- The government will ensure that the railway is safe and reliable to where it was before the 2005 rail strike
- By 2014 reliability of service will be improved
- Quality of service will be improved
- Simplification of the railway network: "Anytime, anywhere, in advance."
- Modernisation of the railways in London
- be sent to mobile phones
- 150 mid-sized stations and modernised
- of accessibility for disabled passengers
- any increases in the use of the railway
- half the use of the railway
- Environment:
- The industry will be encouraged to take initiatives like regenerative braking

Note: the full document is available on the website (www.aslef.org.uk)

GOOD AND THE UGLY

The White Paper sets out the government position, but it is part of the consultative process. The proposals become law in the form of an Act of Parliament.

...to doing in our industry over the next three decades. Rail minister Ruth Kelly says in 50 years'.

...always want more – for the good reason that there is always more to ask from this White Paper. If all the proposals in it were implemented there is

...and point out what isn't, and should be ...'

THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSING ... FEATURES OF THE RAILWAY WHITE PAPER

PAGES

...new carriages -nearly 100,000 new seats.

...be invested in capacity enhancement between 2009-14 to accommodate

...in passenger demand

...e spent on Thameslink.

...y money to improve stations and tackle bottlenecks at Birmingham and Reading.

...billion to prepare for the introduction of the Intercity Express trains and generation signalling.

...the refurbishment of 150 stations.

...fares and a fairer balance of investment from taxpayers and fare-

...d tickets – smartcards and tickets to mobile.

...a new Strategic Freight Network.

...of a small 'pool' of new trains to improve rural and regional services, Community Rail, and – for the first time – a commitment to not close lines.

AND RELIABILITY:

...ment claims railway is safer than ever before and reliability is back

...as before the appalling accident at Hatfield in 2000 – despite the

...ing many more people and being used much more intensively.

...iability will allegedly be over 92% - among the best in Europe.

...ervice for passengers – tickets and stations:

...on of fares structure, to three simple categories across the whole

...ytime", "Off peak" "Super Off peak", which can be bought on the day

...e.

...tion of tickets and ticket retailing – with smartcards being rolled out on

...in London and our other major cities. Long distance tickets will be able to

...obile phones.

...ted stations – the backbone of the national network – will be refurbished

...sed with investment of £150m from the government. This is on top of £370m

...ity funding already announced.

...ses in regulated tickets will remain capped at RPI+1%. These account for over

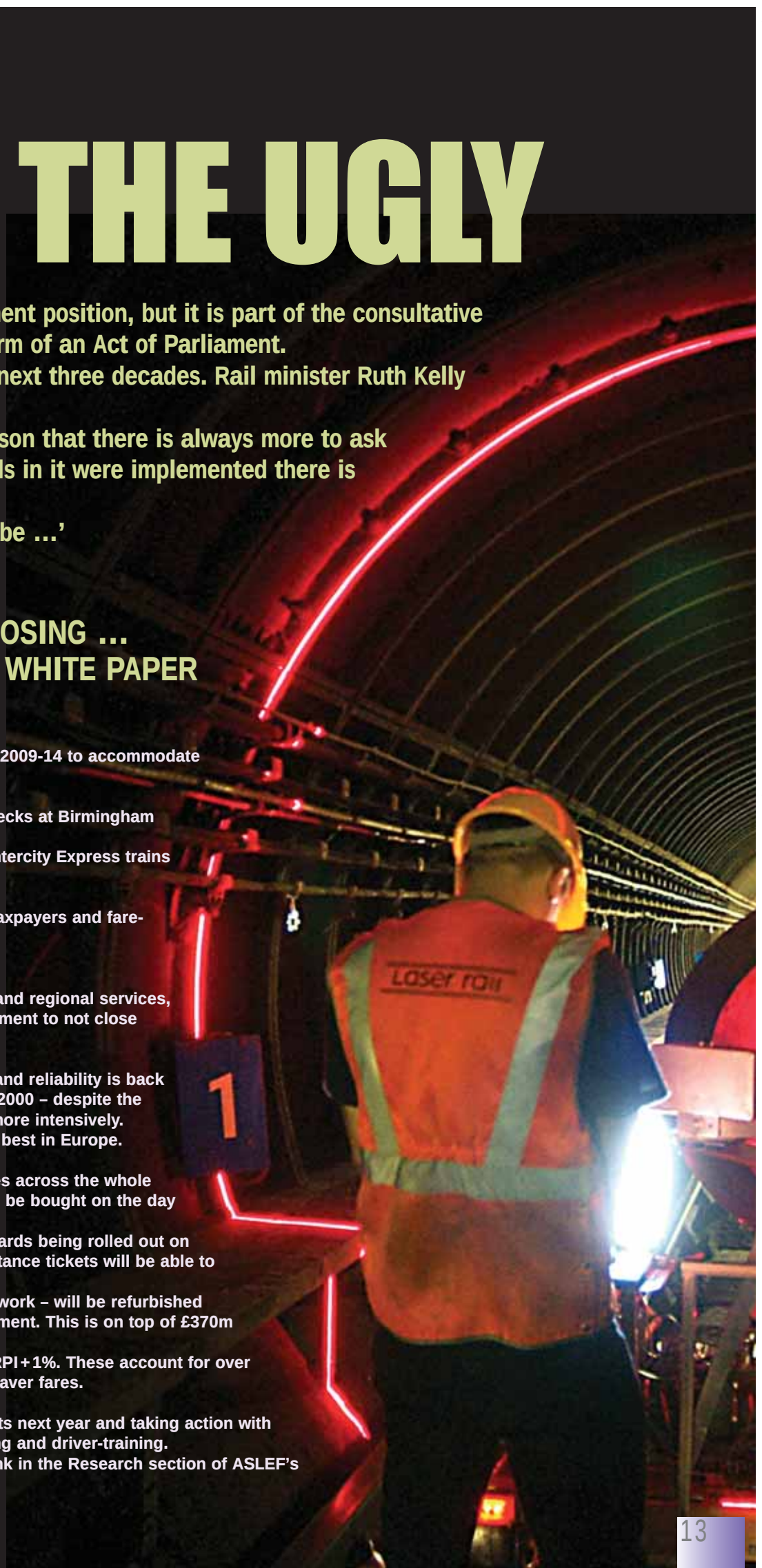
...of the railway and include season tickets and saver fares.

...y will be publishing its carbon reduction targets next year and taking action with

...e regenerative braking, on-train energy metering and driver-training.

...document can be viewed by clicking on the link in the Research section of ASLEF's

...v.aslef.org)



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ASLEF FOOTIE LEEDS THE WAY!



Leeds Men: the winners!



Leeds Women: the finalists!

Leeds ASLEF entered 2 mens and 1 ladies' team in the Thompson Solicitor-sponsored Inter Union 5-a-side trophy. Rather fittingly, the branch teams came first and second respectively! In fact, one ASLEF men's team defeated the other in the final, while the ladies team made it to their final before coming second to AMICUS. This was a remarkable achievement, reports Ray Collier, especially as many of the ladies team were playing their first game of football in a while! And – just look at those brilliant shirts!

FAVERSHAM BRANCH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Steve Gurdler (steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk) tells us that the Faversham Centenary celebration event will be held on Saturday 22 September at 1700 at the Chimney Boy public house in Preston Street, Faversham. All are welcome.

SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION - 20 YEAR REUNION

There will be a Severn Tunnel Junction 20 Year Reunion on Saturday 20 October at the Severn Tunnel Non-Political Club in Rogiet. For more details please contact Stuart Parry who is secretary of the Newport Branch

KINGS CROSS TO STEVENAGE FOR PETER

District 6 Organiser Mick Whelan and First Capital Connect (FCC) Company Councillors Peter Baines and Mick Patson spoke about the thorny problem of Harmonisation at the well-attended June meeting of the Kings Cross branch.

The District Organiser and the Company Councillors of FCC Great Northern, Thames Link, and South Eastern are working to ensure that all drivers will have parity and therefore speak with one voice. I know that ASLEF members, with the leadership of Mick Whelan, will settle for nothing but the best.

After branch business, Peter Sykes was presented with one of Kings Cross Branch's coveted drawings which I am sure will remind him of his days and comrades at Kings Cross

Peter was a Branch officer and FCC Driver but he's decided life is better by the sea side, so he's resigned from FCC and decided to live in Swanage. He has been a volunteer driver on the Swanage preserved railway for some time – and now he is in a position to devote more time to this interest. Their gain is our loss. Peter intends to remain a full time member of ASLEF.

The evening concluded in the bar - an opportunity for new members get know each other, ask questions, air views and glean information.

Peter Smith Reporter - Kings Cross Branch

FULL AGENDA AT NEW STREET

EC member Dave Calfe spoke at Birmingham New Street's July meeting about SMD, pensions, re-mapping and union subs, ASLEF and SERCO and concerns over DB taking over EWS.

It is hoped that the SQUASH campaign can develop into a positive traction specific policy. This is the sort of campaign that makes ASLEF special and justified the AAD decision to increase subs for the first time for 6 years. Dave said the sliding scale of contributions ensures all members are treated fairly – and that the union is moving towards an operating surplus.

Company Council and DFC rep Bro Bill Goode spoke on local disciplinary issues, cab temperatures, local re-mapping, sick leave issues and the bureaucracy and paperwork involved in disciplinary procedures

The evening concluded with Bros Calfe and Goode fielding some stiff questioning, including a suggestion that the Journal has been less than even-handed during the recent National Organiser election. Dave explained dead-line pressures on this occasion, but both he and Bill stressed that the issue underlines the democracy of the union's magazine which should always be accessible to all and any rebuke – or it would be an unacceptable step towards censorship.

The meeting closed with sincere thanks to Dave Calfe.

LUL PROCEDURES COURSE

District 8 provided 20 delegates from LUL and Tubelines branches with a 2-day 'Procedures' course at ASLEF headquarters in May. It was useful to meet and share experiences with other delegates from around the district and thanks are due to head office staff and especially District 8 organiser Steve Grant.

Terry Laws Course Delegate and East Ham Branch Secretary

LIVERPOOL STREET RE-UNION – 29 SEPT

The Liverpool Street Welfare and Social Club is holding its Annual Re-Union on Saturday 29 September in the Downstairs Function Room of 'Dirty Dicks' Public House, Bishopsgate. Any queries please contact John Thorpe, the Secretary of the Liverpool Street Welfare & Social Club on 01621 851110.

CRICKLEWOOD REUNION

The next reunion will be on Friday 19 October at the Great Western, Wolverhampton, from noon onwards. Contact G.W. Nash at 22 Nibletts Hill, Bristol BC5 8BH

VIC SHINER – A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Along with many others I attended the funeral in Ruislip of Bro V.G.Shiner (Vic) who passed away in July just a few days short of his 84th birthday. Vic was a fine man who held and practiced traditional working class values.

The loves of his life were his wife Vera, son Brian (who sadly passed away aged 45years) his daughters-in-law and his grandchildren. He loved and supported the old Communist Party for whom he worked tirelessly all his life. Vic was no supporter of Bollinger Socialism.

He was also a lifelong supporter of Queens Park Rangers even after they installed a plastic pitch!! I will never forget Vic for the help he gave me during my period as a member of the old Western Region Sectional Council 'B'. Vic was our Vice-chairman and he was a formidable advocate who always tried his best for the locomotive fraternity.

After we lost the flexible rostering strike back in 1982 Vic was scathing towards those who failed our union. He understood better than any of us what was going on in high places to ensure that ASLEF would be defeated and he never forgave those who he thought were responsible for that defeat.

During the miner's strike Vic and our membership at Old Oak Common depot adopted a pit in South Wales called Penrhiwceiber and good solid working relationships and friendships began. Try as he might Vic could never say the name correctly - the nearest he got was 'Pentreceiber'! - but it didn't matter as everyone knew where his heart was.

To this day two miner's lamps and a pick and shovel remain on display at Old Oak Common as a visible token of thanks from Welsh miners for the support given by Vic and our membership at Old Oak, despite several attempts by a Tory MP to have them removed.

The ceremony at Breakspeare crematorium was a humanist one and it was a fitting tribute to a man who always helped others in time of need. I was pleased to see so many comrades and friends in attendance to pay their last respects to Vic.

Keith Norman - General Secretary

have our faults! – and was interested in the navy and things nautical.

Our thoughts go to his wife, Barbara and his family at this sad time.

Paul Keenan Secretary -
Gateshead and Newcastle
branch

FRED CLEAL - A LOYAL MEMBER

ASLEF and its Portsmouth branch lost a very special person when Fred Cleal passed away at the age of 89 years young.

My association with Fred really began during the 1955 strike when he talked me into my first representative role on behalf of 35 cleaners. When the order came for us to return to work Fred, Fred Weston and others whose names I don't recall told management that they would only take orders from ASLEF – which arrived after shifts had started!

Fred was never active in the union himself, but the friendship, experience and advice he gave us 'youngsters' was invaluable.

Fred was my driver when he went into the 'dual link' waiting to become a Motorman. He often came and 'knocked me up' when I overslept! He helped me a great deal with my driving exam, as many drivers did, because the only training was from experienced drivers and the 'giants' who voluntarily ran the Mutual Improvement Classes.

A story that sums up Fred Cleal concerns the 1982 ASLEF strike. Many encouraged him to go sick because he only had 5/6 weeks before he retired. Fred wouldn't hear of it. 'I am an ASLEF man and as such I want to walk down Goldsmith Avenue with my head held high.'

He certainly did that and retained our friendship and respect throughout his life. We will miss him at this year's reunion – but he will always remain in our hearts.

Condolences to his family.

Len Worboys Retired
Member

LES CARNEY – AN EXAMPLE

It is with sadness that I report the passing of retired Frodingham driver Brother Les Carney aged 80.

Les entered the railways service in 1941 in an office in Grimsby before joining the Footplate Fraternity in 1945. He transferred to Frodingham when he became redundant in the early 1960's.

Although Les wasn't a regular branch attendee he got well involved with the railway community. He was on the 'Frodingham Gala and Kid's Party Committee' until the advent of slot machines in our mess rooms transformed it into the Social and Welfare (or 'Bandit'!) Committee. Les became its Chairman.

I looked up to Les with respect. He was like a father figure as he always looked after me. He didn't just give me advice on different matters – he'd also hand me a packet of crisps at 'snap time'!

He is one of those characters

who'll be sadly missed. Our heartfelt condolences go to his wife and family.

David Doherty Reporter -
Immingham Branch

ROBERT CAIN – A QUIET SCOT

'Bob' as we affectionately knew him was a quiet softly-spoken man who was liked by all. Born in 1934 in Lochelly in Fife, he started on the railway at Keltly in 1958.

The 1960s were a time of upheaval where dieselization forced many to move to stay in the industry. In 1968 Bob came to Kings Cross.

Like many of his colleagues he stayed in the Ilford Hostel, where he stayed for 9 months. Although still working at Kings Cross, he finally settled in Peterborough.

It was always a pleasure to work with Bob during the days of double manning, but sadly the 'big C' took its toll and he died on 4 July at the age of 73.

He was another unfortunate comrade who worked many

years to provide for his family but had a short time to enjoy his retirement. It is a lesson for us all.

May be rest in peace.

P.J. Smith Kings Cross
Branch Reporter

JOHN STEPHENSON – A FAMILY MAN

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of John Stephenson at the age of 64. Although born in the North East, John moved down south to start his career on the railways in 1957 as a cleaner at Kings Cross. He progressed through the grades before moving to Chingford in 1968 to gain his Driver's position. Later the same year he moved to Ilford where he remained until he moved back to Newcastle in 1989.

John's life revolved around his family, but he was still fond of a pint or three! He could often be found with friends in his local establishment putting the world to rights. John supported Arsenal – but we all



DISTRICT 8 UPDATE

GRINDING OUT PROGRESS

At a series of meetings, management meandered from talking about disciplinary policy, grievance procedures and medical redeployment. Finally at last month's two-day meeting they opted to discuss attendance.

Management complain that the average national figure for non-attendance is 7 days absence a year – while the LUL figures is 17. The employer argued that this was the fault of the Attendance at Work (AAW) procedure. The ASLEF view is that management don't use it properly – and if they did, it would eliminate the alleged high non-attendance.

The company complained that 18% of staff scheduled for Underground Occupational Health (LUOH) appointments failed to attend. We pointed out that it would help if staff were actually told they were supposed to attend and were more likely to turn up at a mutually agreed time.

The union also raised cases of members waiting at home for months on end when they wanted to come to work – and staff waiting for assessment for hearing aid and colour vision trials.

We also had to explain what 'case conferences' were when management began talking about patterns of non-attendance!

For no apparent reason, management wanted to redefine 'long term sickness' as 21 days. We pointed out that their proposal to trigger a caution after 4 days sickness would result in longer rather than shorter absences.

Training was the only area revealing a meeting of minds – and this was mainly due to

management not understanding procedures or policy!

We raised certain problems at Upminster including GP certification for Bank Holidays and being booked absent and docked money for lateness. We were assured that they would resolve it by the next meeting – but because of abuses of the AAW procedures, ASLEF left the meeting. 15 minutes later, the other unions followed.

SECOND HALF

The following day management assured us that 'the' problem' at Upminster had been sorted out. We said 'problems'. They weren't aware of any second problem – although this had been repeatedly raised over the previous month.

Gerry Duffy said ASLEF wouldn't be allowed to walk out – even though we hadn't said we would. We did ask for an adjournment – but this was refused. Eventually ASLEF remained as observers whilst management and the other unions competed to establish exactly how little they actually knew about the AAW procedure.

For example, management did not see the problem of using emergency contact numbers when staff were off sick or with stopping pay for employees who didn't call in on the first day of sickness. They assume that staff absent more than twice, or for more than 7 days, are abusing the system – or simply taking the mickey.

They would like to see all sanctions dated from the date of the disciplinary – not the trigger – and see no problem delaying disciplinary meeting for weeks or even months. They also favour an end to

variations to sanction lengths so that 'one period fits all' – and doubling the minimum period to 52 weeks. They also argue for, in the majority of cases, GP certificates for all period of sickness – even less than 7 days. Finally they'd like to remove excluded items list and consider all non-attendance items on a case by case basis.

We look forward to the next meeting, which should have taken place by the time you read this.

D.A. Feldwick

CAB SECURE RADIO ('CONNECT')

A weekly Joint Working Group was established to deal with increasing complaints with the new 'Connect' system. After our initial complaints about 'Mayday' calls not receiving prompt responses, it is now obvious that this is the tip of the ice-berg. Other problems include poor training, improper radio protocols, culture of misuse and various human factor related issues. As a result, an improved training programme is underway for the next Line due to receive Connect, a regular monitoring system of Mayday calls is to be introduced, a company-wide drive to improve radio communications has begun and staff notices have been posted regarding radio misuse.

LINE UPGRADES

Between 2009 and 2010, the Victoria Line and those lines on the sub surface railway will be receiving new trains and a new Westinghouse 'Distance-to-Go' signalling system. Also, the Jubilee Line will get a 'moving-block' signalling system which incorporates a new train

operator display. This upgrade continues into 2008. Consultation has been woeful with individual management team responses varying from almost acceptable to downright hostile. We reminded LUL that at some point we would report to the Executive Committee – and if we did this right now, it would probably cause ASLEF to be at loggerheads with them. This seems to have had the desired effect as the LUL Director in charge of upgrades seems to be making a genuine attempt to put consultation back on track.

'METRONET'

After Metronet went into administration LUL assured everyone that this would not affect maintenance and modernisation programmes for track and other infrastructure. We remain sceptical, believing it will inevitably slow down progress.

Already we are seeing LUL managers saying we should be less demanding when supporting local representatives who are seeking health and safety improvements and maintenance.

There has always been a feeling that since PPP contracts began, LUL has stood between us and Metronet when they have failed to fulfil their contractual obligations with regards to our members' safety. Nobody has been able to explain this and now with this latest turn of events, we expect this 'defence' of their poor performance to continue or even increase. We will endeavour to press for these issues to be addressed.

Kevin Croissant Secretary, of the Trains Health & Safety Council (ASLEF)

KEY WORKER

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE (W THE SOUND OF RAILWAY

STEVEN HILL had little chance of escaping a life on the railways. His family reunions are more like rail trade fairs than gatherings of the clan. Over the last eighty-odd years over a dozen of his close family have worked in the industry – where they've covered 20 different jobs! In fact there have been Hills on the rail since 1871, according to 'family historian' Laura, Steven's sister.

Steven's father Ben Jim Hill was a 'train register lad' at Ashburys East Junction in the 1920s, securing a position at the station in 1926. The 1930s found him working as a shunter at Ardwick East and later as a goods guard. His railway career ended as a timekeeper at Ashton Road.

His brother, Benjamin, started as a 'signal lamp lad' in 1947, progressing to being a 'train register lad' for LNER at London Road, and later at Ashburys East Junction. He became a shunter at Ardwick West when he was 21. When he retired in 1993, Benjamin was part of the permanent way based at Stockport.

His brother George is an ASLEF member who works for Virgin West Coast out of Manchester Piccadilly after passing out as a driver in 1980. George began as a traction trainee and has previously worked for BR, Railfreight and EWS at Crewe.

His brother Robert doesn't drive trains – but he used to! He passed out in 1989 after starting as a permanent way worker and working for a time as a second man. Robert left the industry for a while, but now he's back as traincrew for Northern – and he's eyeing those controls again!

His sister Laura – and it's almost a relief to write it! –

isn't a train driver. On the other hand, she is married to Steve Biddulph – who drives for Virgin Cross Country – and she's been a carriage cleaner, safety manager, booking office clerk, and a train manager!

His mother Vera was a carriage cleaner, while her mother, also a carriage cleaner, was married to Railway Carter Albert Hiden.

Aunt Florence was a ticket collector, while Aunt Edith was a porter at Fairfield Station – where she was working when

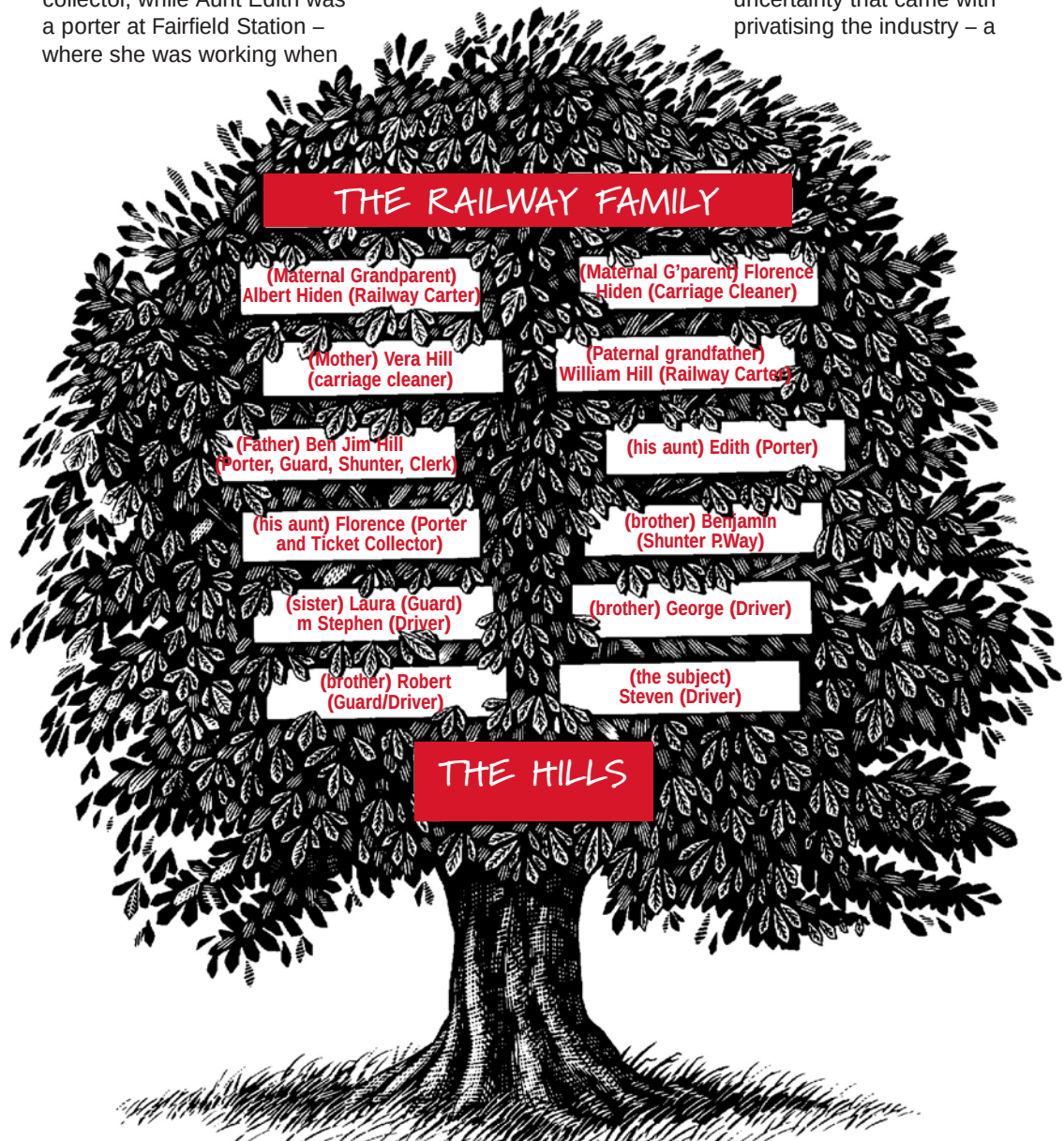
she became the first woman awarded a Certificate of Merit for her efforts in saving 'a passenger from probable fatal injury' in 1916. Her certificate, now at the York Railways Museum, is signed by the celebrated loco designer Sam Fay.

'Apart from being on the Board, I think we've done just about every job in the business,' says Stephen.

He was 17 when, in 1991 he

joined BR as a carriage cleaner at Longsight depot in his native Manchester. Nine years later Steven passed out as a shunter-come-fitter's mate at the wheel lathe – at just the time that the industry was privatised and Alstom took over train maintenance on the West Coast Main line.

'I was involved in two strikes over pay with the RMT in the 90's,' he recalls. 'It was all due to the confusion and uncertainty that came with privatising the industry – a



Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

WITH YS)!



Over the years, the Hill family have undertaken at least 20 different jobs on the Railway!

- ✓ Booking Office Clerk
- ✓ Carriage Cleaner
- ✓ Carter
- ✓ Conductor
- ✓ Driver
- ✓ Fitter's mate
- ✓ Goods Guard
- ✓ Messenger Boy
- ✓ Permanent Way Worker
- ✓ Porter
- ✓ Safety Manager
- ✓ Second Man
- ✓ Shunter
- ✓ Signal Lamp Lad
- ✓ Signalman
- ✓ Time Keeper
- ✓ Traction Trainee
- ✓ Train Manager
- ✓ Train Register Lad
- ✓ Trainee Driver

disaster from start to finish as far as I'm concerned.'

After 'five good years' on the wheel-lathe, he secured a post as trainee driver with Northern Trains, based at Manchester Victoria. 'I think I wore them down in the end,' he jokes. 'I'd applied to be a driver seven times in fourteen years!'

In April 2005 Steven was at the wheel, passed out as a qualified driver. He'd joined the 'family business' – and that involved joining ASLEF.

The family has a strong union as well as a railway tradition – perhaps the legacy of their father's experiences during – and after – the General Strike. 'He was very bitter at how the strike-

breakers, mainly students, 'trashed' his railway – and then walked away. That – and the experience of a company avoiding compensation to an injured worker – 'radicalised' his politics, and those of his family.

The rail family is also a close one, and the weekend before we met, Steven had been on a Welfare Club outing to the races. 'That sense of belonging was shown when six railway workers went to Grayrigg as soon as they heard of the crash – just to see if there was something they could do. 'I don't know if that would have happened in any other industry,' Steven says.

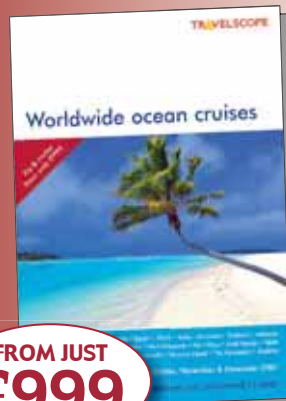
'Driving's a good job – better than a lot of people have got – but like anything else, there's always room for improvement,' he says. 'Some of the duties can be staggeringly monotonous.' He's relieved to be learning new routes that will take him to Huddersfield, Preston and Blackpool, Liverpool and Leeds. 'Even Rochdale and back can lose its glamour after a while!' he says.

As we part in a traditionally soaking wet Manchester Street, Steven reflects how it is difficult to understand how many drivers take today's conditions for granted. 'This union – ASLEF – fought for everything today's drivers have got. We owe it all to people like my father and grandfather. It's all part of that railway tradition.'

And he should know

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LETTERS to the EDITOR



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Good Council

AS Southeastern Drivers Company Council we would not want to get into any debate on the rights and wrongs of the subject via the Journal, however we would like to put the record straight on a number of points that the writer failed to mention. The current situation on Southeastern is that if a Driver is off work due to sickness, he can either produce a self certificate to cover him for a period of less than 7 days and receive statutory sick pay or get a private Doctors certificate for approx £10.00 and receive company sick pay (full salary) for the period off work. R Thomas was here when the company ran a trial where you could self certificate for less than 7 days and receive company sick pay (full salary) for the period off work, at the time of the trial the sickness went up significantly and management put an end to the trial. It was explained to members prior to the trial the consequences if sickness levels increased. The company did not impose this practise on the Driver grade it was part of the original DRI Pay & Conditions deal, which went to ballot and

was accepted by the majority of the membership as part of a package (i.e. money and conditions).

Drivers Company Council
Southeastern

Don't show the door to my 4x4

T. PETERS' response to Iain Urquhart's letter is typical of the tabloid journalism frenzy we'd expect from the likes of 'The Sun' – especially the comment 'I hope he doesn't own a gas guzzling 'Chelsea Tractor'.' There are a lot of myths about 4x4s.

Firstly, some parts of rural Britain depend on 4X4's to get about, especially in the Lake District and the Scottish highlands. If Bro Peters had his way, these vehicles would be taxed off the road for the ordinary person. (People in Chelsea aren't going to worry about this – whereas a farmer already struggling to make a living really will.)

The term 'Chelsea Tractor' is usually aimed at Range Rovers and other Land Rovers. Well, I drive a Land Rover Defender 90 which has a wheel base of 90 inches, which is about the same as a Ford Focus, and much less than most estate cars. Yes it's a little higher, but at least I have more chance of seeing a small child playing behind a parked car.

Its fuel consumption at 26 -27 miles per gallon is not the best but it's pretty close to many cars that most people don't bat an eye lid at.

Best of all, when Glasgow suffered its worst snow in 20 years one Saturday night in March 2006, I and two colleagues were able to get in to work and get the services started for people stranded overnight in the city. It was no coincidence we all drive 4X4's.

Global warming wouldn't disappear if every 4X4 was scrapped tomorrow – and that's certainly the case with Land Rovers. The first Land Rover was produced in 1948 (the company is 60 next year) and in April this year it made its 4 millionth vehicle! (This was a Discovery 3, which Land Rover donated to the Born Free

foundation, a charity it has supported since the 60's). BMW have sold more cars than this in Britain alone! Perhaps we should be more concerned about the effect on the British car industry of people driving BMWs, Volkswagens, Audis and Mercedes.

How many people who drive these cars complain about Britain being in the EU, and Germany and France trying to rule Britain?

Do we really want to see Land Rover forced to move abroad, and lose another British car maker?

Gordon Harrington Glasgow
Branch

We owe a lot to our reps

THROUGH our Journal may I offer my sincere thanks to DDC rep D. Samuels for all his help and assistance following a – shall we call it 'safety on the line incident'? – on 6 December last year. I had carried out the rules and regulations of the railway, only to be taken off the footplate on arrival at Plymouth, medi-screened and just about made to look like a criminal.

After non-stop work by Bro D. Samuels, I have received a letter from higher Great Western management offering their apologies. In some way this does them credit, but I know that this only came about due to the work of my DDC rep.

As a footnote, I would like to say a big 'thank you' to all ASLEF reps throughout the country. Having done a 'stand-in' LDC position, I know that being a rep is not easy in this day and age. I think I speak for a lot of drivers in this comment, and I'd glad that men and women are prepared to stand for reps positions. Without them I wouldn't like to think where a lot of us would be.

Driver A. W. Tyler Plymouth

Thanks for further term

I WOULD like to offer my sincere thanks to all the members who voted for me to retain my position as National Organiser. There is much work to do as we strive to continually improve ASLEF's organisation,

communication and negotiating abilities. It has always been my aim to provide the first-class union that our members deserve. I am grateful to you for the opportunity to work towards this end for a further five years.

Once again, many thanks.

Andy Reed National
Organiser

Thanks - and a warning

I WISH to thank all of you who supported me in the recent National Organiser's election. Although I was unsuccessful it was very heartening to have you place your faith in me.

We should take the very low turn out as a warning as it highlights the importance of communicating with the wider membership and ensuring that ASLEF remains relevant in the workplace. I intend to continue this work in my role as the Executive Committee member for District 1.

Once again, thank you for your support.

Simon Weller Executive
Committee

Painful seating

I READ with great interest in the July Journal that cab seat design was to be examined. I am convinced that my health problems started after driving a long shift on uncomfortable seating.

I got out of the cab and my rear was numb – but when I woke up I was really sore. This happened several times without me realising I had a serious problem. I did not now what it was as it eased off when I was not on duty.

Things went downhill rapidly and I was eventually admitted to hospital to have a peri-anal abscess excised. Then I found out I have to have further surgery as I have a sinus or fistula. This will involve cutting through all affected tissue and laying the wound open for daily packing. It means not only will I be suffering a lot of pain, but I am having a great deal of sick leave.

Are these problems more

common among drivers? If I had known about it, I would have gone to my GP quickly and not let it get so bad. I just want you to know about this as it may save others going through the same painful experience.

I am due in hospital on 21 August for an examination under anaesthetic and laying open of the wound. I have been informed that this may take 3 months to heal! If this condition is predictable or avoidable by having better seats then I want some action taken fast please.

B. P. R. Johnson Central
Trains – Cambridge

Disappointment over 66 action

I AM writing to express my disappointment on how the ASLEF directive instructing members to refuse to work Class 66 locos from Monday 18 June was handled. Advice from head office on progress was not satisfactory - we were left unsure whether the refusal to work had been rescinded.

As the deadline approached I was asked about the situation by branch members. I replied that I would probably be able to give them information over the weekend - before the deadline.

No information was sent to me then - and to date I have still received nothing. I am led to understand that there was something on the website, but at that time I had no PC. A driver at our Crewe depot told me that there was a similar lack of information there.

I think this undermined a good campaign and it has reduced ASLEF's standing with

many drivers. This is not good for the union's local branches that try so hard to promote and support ASLEF campaigns.

Paul Moore Secretary -
Ipswich Branch

What happened to acid rain?

HAVING just read the Letters in the August 2007 Journal, I am still unsure about the comments of Bros Peters and Forrest regarding who is to blame for global warming. I believe it feasible that man could be contributing to global warming, but I am still unconvinced as to whether we are entirely to blame.

One thing I am very sure of though, is the truth of the comments of Bro Hardy. I'm sure that this 'buzz-word' of 'global warming' is being used as a lever by the government to screw more money from the working class. It's being used as another stealth tax.

This government - or any other for that matter - doesn't

seem interested in any proposal that helps the planet or the effects of so-called global warming if it involves spending money. It seems more hell-bent on taking money from hard-working citizens.

When I read in the ASLEF Journal that just one freight train removes 60 lorries from

our roads, I wonder why more isn't being done by our government to improve freight on rail?

Just one last comment on buzz words: whatever happened to the buzz word of the 90's: Acid Rain?

Graham Garnett Toton
Branch

WAKE UP AND BUILD THE UNION!



How right our General Secretary was in the August Journal regarding the 'missing 2000'. As one of my members said after reading the article, 'The more I read Keith Norman, the more I like what he has to say!' I couldn't agree more - and if the truth hurts, so be it!

Speaking of truth, we should also be asking questions of our own membership when it comes to participation in the process of democratic elections - that is, voting for candidates running for positions within our union.

Has apathy taken over? In the recent national election, over 16,000 ballot papers were distributed and less than one third of them were returned. I realise people have other things to do, but our members must become more active and involved within their branches. After all, putting an 'X' in a box and sending it off in a pre-paid envelope is not hard!

If the 'missing 2,000' are to take notice and join our trade union, we must not be seen to be complacent or resting on our laurels. We have a strong union with a great history and traditions. It is the members who make it that way - so let's get rid of the apathy and get active!

ALAN REID Yoker

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SALISBURY LOYALTY BADGES: Following the 2006 dispute with SWT, Salisbury Branch is able to offer a limited number of unique loyalty badges for sale. Please contact Salisbury Branch Secretary, Tom Corbin, 26 Winding Way, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 9EA. will accept postal orders or cheques made payable to Mr T Corbin. Price £4.50 including P&P (extra for £0.50 for recorded delivery). Local ASLEF members can purchase directly from the Branch at £3.00 each.



FAVERSHAM CENTENARY BADGE: the Faversham branch was 100 years old on 23 June and will be holding a celebration/presentation evening in September. The branch has struck a limited number of badges (numbered on the back) available at £10 each and plain ones at £5 each - plus £1 p&p. Badges are available from branch secretary Steve Gurdler (steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk).

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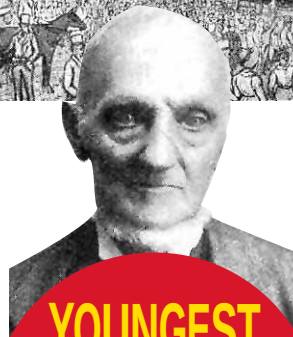
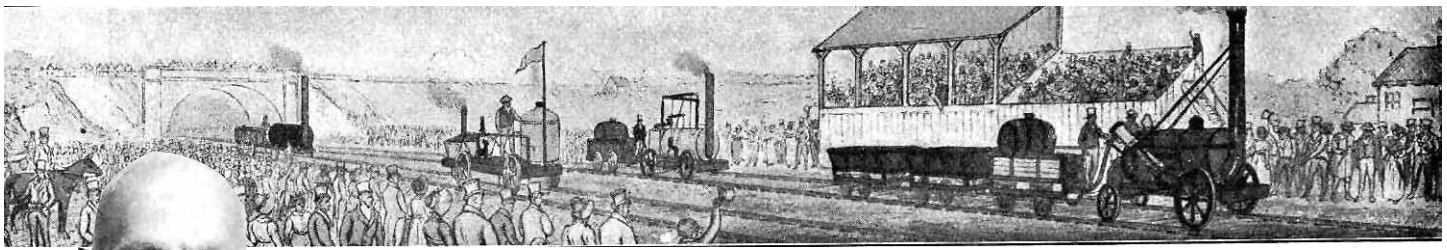
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**YOUNGEST
DRIVER
REVEALED!**

HATS OFF TO EDWARD ENTWISTLE – THE MAN WHO DROVE THE ROCKET!

There was something of a debate in the Journal earlier in the year about who was the youngest train driver – and we believe we've now got the definitive answer! It's difficult to argue against the case for Edward Entwistle – who drove the famous Rocket at the tender age of 14! Edward, who was born in Tilsey's Banks in Lancashire in 1815, wasn't just the youngest professional train driver – he was also the first.

WHILE Edward was a Lancashire schoolboy, events were taking place, seemingly worlds away from his life, that would eventually coincide and transform his existence. At about the same time that Mrs Entwistle conceived her son, an engineer called George Stephenson was conceiving a vision of a railway that would run (or at least walk quickly) between Liverpool and Manchester. In 1825 when Edward was ten, Parliament granted a charter that authorised work on Stephenson's vision to commence. He had told the Parliamentary committee that his engines would 'travel fast enough and pull freight enough to pay interest on the money invested.'

Three years after this Edward Entwistle was considered – at 13 - old enough to work. He was apprenticed as a machinist to the Duke of Bridgewater, and put to work in the shops in Liverpool. He must have heard of the offer of a prize of £500 for the best high-speed engine for passenger service, and known that the rails were in place and that the Rocket had been constructed. He would not have known, however, that Stephenson had no engine-driver in whom he felt confident.

As fate had it, Stephenson went to the shops in Liverpool where many parts of the

engine had been made, to ask the foreman for a man to run the engine.

'I have no man that is suitable,' Stephenson was told. 'But if you take that lad there, and can get the permission of the Duke's steward' – because he was still indentured to his apprenticeship – 'you may have him, and I'll warrant that he will be satisfactory.'

That 14-year-old 'lad' was Edward Entwistle. The following day – Sunday - he was taking part in a trial trip with the great engineer. And the next day he was at the throttle of the Rocket for the great contest.

The public wonder at the Rocket's achievement in October 1829 is difficult to conceive today. The eye of a man had never seen a machine running at the breathtaking speed of a mile every two minutes.

For the following two and a half years after the contest, Edward Entwistle ran a train on the road, making two to four return trips daily. He became nervous and ill at the strain to which he was constantly subjected; 'Many's the time I've made the thirty-one miles from Liverpool to Manchester in sixty minutes,' he said. Stressed out, he gave up the job.

He took up a post on one of the Duke of Bridgewater's coasting steamers, where he remained until the year Victoria was crowned – 1837. Then he upped-sticks and moved to America.

He was working on a Hudson River steamer when the engine driver of a train called the 'York' was injured – and he was drafted in as the replacement, but he didn't stay long on the railway, and soon moved back to the water. When his boat, Troy,

was declared unsafe he took the engines to Rockland Country, New York, and set them up in a rolling mill.

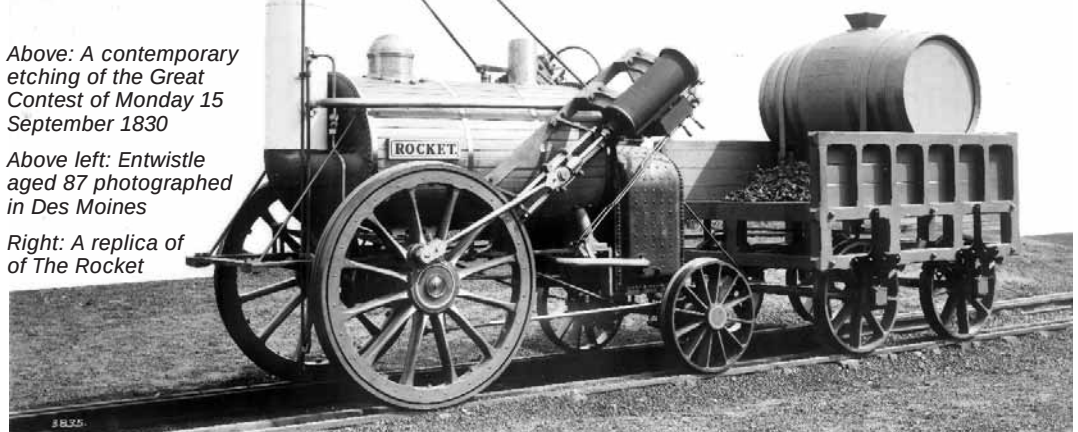
In 1844 he landed in Chicago, working mainly on stationery engines, but for several seasons he also ran the Rossiter, a lake steamer. His final move was to Des Moines. He ran a boat between this town and Keokuk until the river ceased to be navigable.

When he was 87 years old, in 1902, he was interviewed in Des Moines – where he had lived for the previous 45 years – for the December edition of The Strand Magazine. It was then 73 years since his famous Rocket journey and by that time Edward Entwistle had raised enough cash to invest in a farm that provided for himself and his wife, one of the oldest – and best preserved – couples in the State of Iowa.

Above: A contemporary etching of the Great Contest of Monday 15 September 1830

Above left: Entwistle aged 87 photographed in Des Moines

Right: A replica of The Rocket



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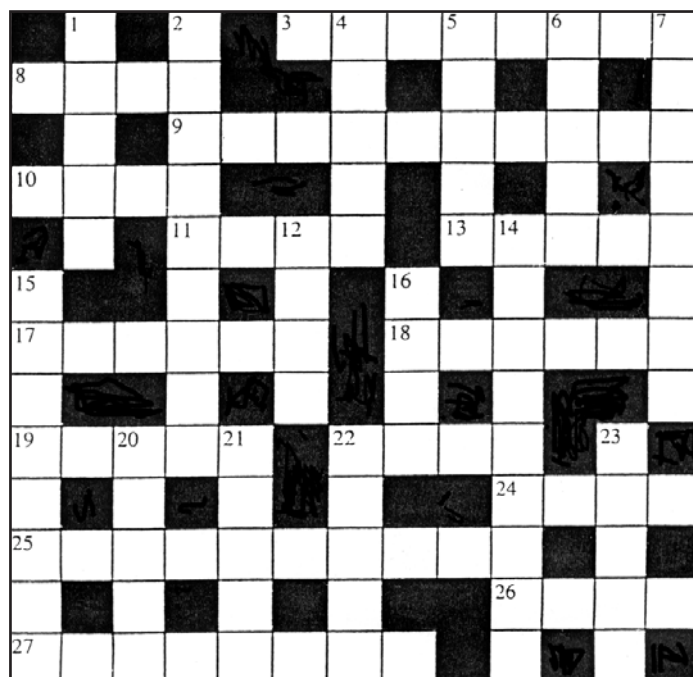
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ASLEF more than just a union



Prize Crossword No. 17

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 16 which appeared in the August edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to is **Mrs K Maddison** from **Immingham**

ACROSS 3 Rush hour 8 Golf 9 Tube trains 10 Ride 11 Reed 13 Miser 17 Absorb 18 Casino 19 Grant 22 Sure 24 Cord 25 Government 26 Oaks 27 Silencer **DOWN** 1 Solid 2 Afternoon 4 Upend 5 Harem 6 Omits 7 Rest Room 12 Ebbs 14 Inspector 15 Baggages 16 Ecru 20 Anvil 21 Turin 22 Somme 23 Brake

Thanks for all your responses to the sixteenth ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

Clues Across

- 3 Underground line (8)
8 There's no place like it! (4)
9 Station where a small bear likes to hang out! (10)
10 Speaking with slight affliction (4)
11 Type of Jug (4)
13 Creepy (5)
17 Mistakes (6)
18 Place where freight is deposited (6)
19 Medicine to make one feel better (5)
22 As well as (4)
24 Twelve months (4)
25 'Iron horse' (10)
26 Not difficult (4)
27 Places to protect one from danger (8)

- the rear of a truck (5)
2 Spicy sausage (9)
4 Instruction (5)
5 Feeling edgy, on tenterhooks (5)
6 Go in (5)
7 Talking rubbish (8)
12 Concert party for the Forces (initials)
14 Workers (9)
15 Aquatic creatures, crocodiles, etc (8)
16 Worshipped by many (4)
20 Small recess in a wall etc (5)
21 Celestial body (5)
22 One who plays a part on a stage (5)
23 Elevate (5)

Clues Down

- 1 Set of wheels supporting

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



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